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background notes

Cuba

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

October 1990

Official Name: Republic of Cuba

PROFILE

People

Nationality: *Noun*—Cuban(s); *adjective*—Cuban. **Population:** 10,513,800 (Sept. 1989); 70% urban, 30% rural. **Avg. annual growth rate:** 0.93%. **Density:** 95/sq. km. (238/sq. mi.). **Ethnic groups:** Spanish-African mixture. **Language:** Spanish. **Education:** *Years compulsory*—6. **Attendance:** 92% (ages 6-16). **Literacy:** 98.5%. **Health:** *Infant mortality rate*—11.8/1,000. *Life expectancy*—75 years. No statistics available by sex. **Work force:** 3.3 million; 30% government and services, 29% industry, 13% agriculture, 11% commerce, 10% construction, 7% transportation and communications (1987).

Geography

Area: 110,860 sq. km. (44,200 sq. mi.); about the size of Pennsylvania. *Capital*—Havana (pop. 2 million). *Other cities*—Santiago de Cuba, Camaguey, Santa Clara, Holguin, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Pinar del Rio. **Terrain:** Flat or gently rolling plains, hills, mountains up to 2,000 meters (6,000 ft.) in the southeast. **Climate:** Tropical; moderated by trade winds; dry season (November-April); rainy season (May-October).

Government

Type: Communist state; current government assumed power January 1, 1959. **Independence:** May 20, 1902. **Constitution:** February 24, 1976.

Branches: *Executive*—President, Council of Ministers. *Legislative*—National Assembly of People's Government. *Judicial*—People's Supreme Court.

Political party: Cuban Communist Party (PCC). **Suffrage:** All citizens age 16 and older, except those who have applied for permanent emigration. National Assembly elections were held in 1986 and municipal elections for local assemblies in 1989.

Administrative subdivisions: 14 provinces and one special municipality (Havana).

Flag: White star centered on red triangle at staff side, three blue and two white horizontal bands.

Economy

Gross social product (GSP) (This economic measure is not convertible to GNP/GDP) (1990 est.): $27 billion.

Real annual growth rate: 0.0% (1988).

Per capita income: $2,644.

Natural resources: Nickel, cobalt, iron ore, copper, manganese, salt, timber.

Agriculture: *Products*—sugar, citrus and tropical fruits, tobacco, coffee, rice, beans, meat, and vegetables.

Industry: *Types*—sugar, food processing, oil refining, cement, electric power, light consumer and industrial products.

Trade: *Exports*—$5.4 billion (f.o.b. 1987): sugar and its byproducts, petroleum, nickel, seafood, citrus, tobacco, rum. *Major markets*—USSR, 72%; other communist countries, 15%. *Imports*—$7.6 billion (c.i.f. 1987): capital goods, industrial raw materials, food, petroleum, consumer goods. *Major suppliers*—USSR, 72%, other communist countries, 14%.

Official exchange rate: 1 Cuban peso=US$1.33.

Membership in International Organizations

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), Group of 77 (G-77), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), Latin American Economic System (SELA), United Nations and some of its specialized and related agencies, including UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), Universal Postal Union (UPU), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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PEOPLE

Cuba is a multi-racial society with a population of mainly Spanish and African origins. The largest organized religion is the Roman Catholic Church. Government and communist party restrictions on religions and discrimination against churchgoers intimidate Cuban citizens from practicing their faiths and restrict their professional advancements.

HISTORY

Before the arrival of Columbus in 1492, Cuba was inhabited by three groups—Cyboneys, Guanahabibes, and Tainos—the last of which introduced agriculture, including maize and tobacco, to the island. As Spain developed its colonial empire in the Western Hemisphere, Havana (La Havana—"the haven") became an important commercial seaport. Settlers eventually moved inland, devoting themselves mainly to sugarcane and tobacco farming. As the native Indian population died out, African slaves were imported to work on the plantations. A 1774 census counted 96,000 whites, 31,000 free blacks, and 44,000 slaves in Cuba. Slavery was abolished in 1886.

Cuba was the last major Spanish colony to gain independence. The independence movement began in 1850, when Cuban planters financed and led several expeditions against Spanish garrisons on the island. In 1868, the Ten Years' War for independence began under the leadership of Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, whom the Cubans consider the father of their country. Twenty-four years later, Jose Marti, Cuba's greatest national hero, initiated plans for a general uprising. He announced the "Grito de Baire" in 1895, which heralded the beginning of Cuba's final struggle for independence. Shortly after, Marti died in battle.

The United States entered the conflict on the side of the revolutionaries when the USS *Maine*, anchored in Havana Harbor to protect US citizens, was sunk by an explosion of unknown origin on February 15, 1898. On December 10, 1898, Spain signed the Treaty of Paris, ending the Spanish-American War and relinquishing control of Cuba to the United States. The United States administered the island for 3 years. Independence was proclaimed on May 20, 1902.

The United States retained the right to intervene to preserve Cuban independence and stability under the terms of the Platt amendment, which established conditions mandated by Congress for the withdrawal of US troops from Cuba. In 1934, the Platt amendment was repealed in keeping with the Roosevelt administration's "Good Neighbor" policy. Later the same year, the United States and Cuba reaffirmed by treaty their 1903 agreement that leased the naval base at Guantanamo Bay to the United States. This agreement remains in force today and can only be terminated by mutual agreement or abandonment by the United States.

Gen. Gerardo Machado, elected president in 1924, forcibly extended his rule until a popular uprising deposed him in 1933. Army Sergeant Fulgencio Batista led an army and student revolt and established himself as Cuba's dominant leader for more than 25 years. He ruled through a series of presidents and was himself elected in 1940 for 4 years. In March 1952, shortly before regularly scheduled elections, Batista seized the presidency in a bloodless coup.

On July 26, 1953, an armed opposition group led by Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada army barracks at Santiago de Cuba. The attack was unsuccessful, and many, including Castro, were captured and imprisoned. Castro,

released by Batista under an amnesty in May 1955, went into exile in Mexico, where he formed a revolutionary group, the "26th of July Movement."

On December 2, 1956, Castro and 81 of his followers landed in eastern Cuba. All but 12 were soon captured, killed, or dispersed. From this nucleus, Castro's forces eventually grew to several thousand. While a number of other groups in Cuba also actively opposed Batista, Castro's "26th of July" forces became predominant when Batista fled Cuba on January 1, 1959. Castro's assumption of power was widely acclaimed in Cuba and abroad because he seemed to embody the hopes of most Cubans for a return to democratic government and an end to graft and corruption.

Within months, Castro moved to consolidate his power and to set up an authoritarian government. Many leaders of the opposition to Batista were executed or sentenced to lengthy prison terms for opposing Castro's policies. Moderates were forced out of the government, and hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled the island. During an April 1959 visit to Washington, Castro addressed concerns about a reported leftist tilt to his regime by saying, at the National Press Club, "We are against all kinds of dictators, whether of a man, or a country, or a class, or an oligarchy, or by the military. That is why we are against communism." On December 2, 1961, Castro publicly declared himself a Marxist-Leninist. Representative democracy was abolished, effective freedom of expression ended, and all opposition political activity was soon terminated.

GOVERNMENT

Cuba is a totalitarian state dominated by Fidel Castro, who is president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers, first secretary of the communist party and commander in chief of the armed forces. With support from his brother, Raul, and a few longtime associates, Castro exercises control over nearly all aspects of Cuban life through a network of directorates ultimately responsible to him through the communist party.

From January 1959 until December 1976, Castro ruled by decree. The 1976 constitution provides for a party-government structure in which the communist party and its politburo are "the highest leading force of the society and state." The following, along with Fidel and Raul Castro, are members of the communist party politburo: Juan Almeida, Julio Camacho, Osmani Cienfuegos, Abelardo Colome, Vilma Espin, Armando Hart, Esteban Lazo, Jose Machado, Pedro Miret, Jorge Risquet, Carlos Rodriguez, and Robert Veiga.

Executive power is vested in the Council of Ministers, which heads the government. Legislative power resides with the National Assembly of People's Government (a rubber-stamp legislature), but day-to-day control is held by the Council of State. Vice Presidents of the Council of State include: Juan Almeida, Osmani Cienfuegos, Jose Machado, Pedro Miret, and Carlos Rodriguez.

The communist party is Cuba's only legal political party, and it monopolizes all government positions, including judicial offices. All pre-1959 political parties and political organizations have been abolished. Though not a formal requirement, party membership is a de facto prerequisite for high-level official positions and professional advancement in most areas. Cuba's trade unions, women's federation, and youth and other mass organizations are completely controlled by the government and party. These organizations attempt to extend Cuban government and communist party control over each citizen's daily activities at home, work, and school.

The party is composed of the pre-revolution Communist Party of Cuba (in existence since 1925 under a variety of names), which was absorbed, with two other main political groups supporting the revolution, into a new political entity formed by Castro in July 1961. Further refinements resulted in the emergence in late 1965 of the Cuban Communist Party, which held its first congress in 1975. The second and third party congresses were held in 1980 and 1986 and resulted in changes in the membership of the central committee and politburo. Policy changes emphasized increased political indoctrination and the introduction of minor economic incentives. The politburo and central committee together include most of the country's military and civilian leaders.

The constitution states that civil liberties cannot be exercised "contrary to the existence and objectives of the socialist state" (Article 61). Cubans do not possess equal protection under the law, the right freely to choose government representatives, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, or freedom to travel to and from Cuba without restriction. The government and communist party control all electronic and print media.

Cuba has no independent judiciary. Although the constitution specifies that the courts shall be "a system of state organs independent of all others," it explicitly subordinates the judiciary to the National Assembly of People's Government and thus to the Council of State. The People's Supreme Court is the highest judicial body. Due process safeguards can be constitutionally circumvented, and defense attorneys face severe disadvantages under the Cuban judicial system.

The Ministry of Interior ensures political and social conformity, as well as internal security. It operates border and police forces, orchestrates public demonstrations, investigates evidence of nonconformity, regulates migration, and maintains pervasive vigilance through a network of informers and 80,000 block committees (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution—CDR).

In practice, the top leadership determines the degree to which civil liberties are exercised and what is "against the revolution." In 1987 and 1988, prior to a visit to the island of a UN human rights working group, the Cuban government sought to improve its image abroad by tolerating domestic human rights groups and freeing many political prisoners. In 1989 and 1990,

however, the government reversed itself by cracking down on dissent and arresting many human rights activists.

Principal Government Officials

President, Councils of State and Ministers; First Secretary of the Communist Party; and Commander in Chief—Fidel Castro
First Vice President, Councils of State and Ministers; Second Secretary of the Communist Party; General of the Army and Minister of Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR)—Raul Castro
Minister of Foreign Relations—Isidoro Malmierca
Ambassador to the United Nations—Ricardo Alarcon

ECONOMY

For much of its history, Cuba was one of the more prosperous countries in Latin America. Under Castro, however, highly centralized economic control, flawed policies, and corruption have slowed economic growth, particularly in recent years.

Since the early 1960s, The Central Planning Board, working closely with *Banco Nacional de Cuba*, has directed nearly all economic activity. It creates and implements 5-year and annual plans which set prices and targets for production, imports, and exports. Day-to-day responsibility for running the economy and for economic policy rests with the Council of State. Basic public services are provided by the state, either free of charge or for minimal fees. Access to education and medical care generally is adequate, but urban housing has greatly deteriorated, as have communications and other public services.

The state owns and operates most of Cuba's farms and all industrial enterprises. State farms now occupy about 70% of farmland, and peasant cooperatives account for about 20%. Privately owned farms account for about 10% of Cuba's agriculture. Cuba's manufacturing sector emphasizes import substitution and provision of basic industrial materials. In recent years, many Cuban firms have been hurt by shortages of foreign exchange and limited access to spare parts and imported components.

Castro's efforts to diversify the economy and reduce Cuba's dependence on sugar exports in the country's international trade have not been successful. Sugar continues to account for about 75% of export earnings. Within the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), which Cuba joined in 1972, Cuba has specialized in the production of sugar byproducts and, to a lesser extent, light industry, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology. Today, Cuba ranks second only to Brazil as a cane producer and is the world's leading sugar exporter. Sugar, in turn, is Cuba's chief source of foreign exchange. Tobacco has traditionally been Cuba's second-largest agricultural export. Other important crops include coffee and citrus.

Cuba has considerable light industry. Under Castro, electrical power, food processing, and cigar production have increased substantially. There has been only modest growth in the chemical, petroleum, textile, and metallurgy industries. Cuba has two large oil refineries and is constructing a third. Cuba's mining sector accounts for a significant part of export earnings. The country's nickel reserves are the fourth largest in the world. The ore is processed on the island in two formerly US-owned plants at Nicaro and Moa Bay as well as at a third at Punta Gorda that opened in 1985. A fourth refinery at Las Camariocas is expected to open in the next several years, further increasing production. Most of Cuba's nickel output is exported to the Soviet Union.

Cuba produces about 5% of its oil. The balance, some 270,000 barrels per day, is provided by the Soviet Union. Cuba's first nuclear power plant is being built at Juragua, near Cienfuegos, with CEMA assistance.

Much of Cuba's transportation network was developed in pre-revolutionary Cuba to serve the needs of the sugar industry. The road network exceeds 30,000 kilometers (19,000 mi.), of which about half is paved. The island has a 14,640-kilometer (5,600 sq. mi.) railway system. Buses are found throughout urban areas but are notoriously crowded. Havana is the most important of the country's 11 major ports. The national airline, *Cubana de Aviacion*, serves major cities in Cuba and more than a dozen foreign cities in Europe and elsewhere. *AeroCaribbean*, a charter company formed in 1982, provides unscheduled passenger and cargo service to the Caribbean basin and Western Europe.

Before the revolution, more than half of Cuba's trade was with the United States, with which Cuba had a favorable trade balance. In 1962, the United States imposed a comprehensive trade embargo that remains in force. Nonetheless, Havana has continued to import goods—mainly manufactures—from other major noncommunist countries. Cuba pays for such items by exporting sugar, nickel, tobacco, coffee, citrus, and seafood. Cuba also seeks to earn hard currency by promoting tourism, a sector that the country's leaders view as holding considerable potential for future expansion. In 1988, tourism generated $125 million; most of the visitors came from Western Europe and Canada.

During the 1980s, more than 80% of Cuba's external trade was with the Soviet Union and its East European allies, of which the Soviet share normally was more than 70%. The Soviet Union alone imported 80% of all Cuban sugar produced and 40% of all Cuban citrus harvested. Cuba's trade with the Soviet Union and other members of CEMA involves use of nonconvertible currencies. Soft currency earnings from exports of each CEMA member finance imports from that country. Annual trade protocols set the volume of goods to be exchanged between Cuba and other CEMA countries. This situation is changing as the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union introduce market-oriented economic policies that will affect trade with Cuba.

Since July 1986, Cuba has not serviced its roughly $7 billion debt owed to Western creditors, mainly governments. Consequently, Cuba has not received substantial new loans or rescheduling either from the Paris Club or private institutions.

"Rectification" Policy

In April 1986, Castro announced a "rectification of errors and negative tendencies" campaign mandating the observance of strict Marxist orthodoxy in running the economy. The policy, which remains in force today, in many ways is the antithesis of the Soviet "perestroika" (restructuring) concept. "Rectification" emphasizes centralized direction over market forces and moral and ideological, as opposed to material, incentives to spur productivity. It calls upon Cubans to make greater sacrifices in order to further the collective good.

As a part of the "rectification" effort, the government in 1986 closed farmers' markets, through which some people had been able to sell produce grown on their own garden plots at uncontrolled prices since 1980. It also sought to eliminate many bonuses and overtime pay for workers. Meanwhile, the Castro government has encouraged voluntary labor, in the form of "micro-brigades" and "contingents," especially in the construction sector, and has tried to reduce corruption and black marketeering.

Castro's "rectification" policy has decreased per capita gross domestic product and further stifled private economic initiative since 1985. Rationing and shortages of certain foodstuffs are becoming increasingly severe. Underemployment, a chronic problem, has worsened with the return of thousands of veterans from Angola and guest workers previously sent to Eastern Europe. Access to education and medical care generally is adequate, but urban housing has greatly deteriorated, as have communications and other public services.

DEFENSE

Under Castro, Cuba has become one of the most highly militarized societies in the world. In Latin America, only Brazil, with a population more than 12 times that of Cuba, has a larger military. In 1958, Cuba's armed forces numbered 46,000. Today, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (RAF) contain almost 300,000 active-duty and ready reserves—265,000 army, 18,500 air force/air defense, and 13,500 navy, plus several military units under the Ministry of the Interior. More than 1 million Cubans belong to the country's two paramilitary organizations, the Territorial Militia Troops and the Youth Labor Army.

Cuba's military establishment is one of the most modern in the region. Since 1975, massive Soviet military assistance has enabled Cuba to upgrade its military capabilities and project power abroad. The tonnage of Soviet military deliveries to Cuba in each year for the period 1981-84 exceeded deliveries in any year since the 1962 missile crisis, when a record 250,000 tons was shipped. Today, Cuba's air force, with some 200 Soviet-supplied jet fighters, including advanced MiG-23 Floggers and MiG-29 Fulcrums, is probably the best equipped in Latin America. The Cuban army has almost 1,000 Soviet-supplied T-62 and T-54/55 main battle tanks.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Under Fidel Castro's leadership, Cuba pursues an ambitious foreign policy for a country of its size and resources, maintaining relations with 122 countries and stationing thousands of its civilian and military personnel in more than 20 nations abroad. The basic tenets of Cuban foreign policy are opposition to the United States and its foreign policy, support for revolutionary movements, and close cooperation with the USSR.

When it first came to power, the Castro government supported the spread of revolution by aiming to reproduce throughout Latin America the rural-based guerrilla warfare experience of the "26th of July" movement. In 1959, Cuba aided armed expeditions against Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. During the early and mid-1960s, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia all faced serious Cuban-backed attempts to develop guerrilla insurgencies. These movements to failed to attract much popular support. The most severe blow to Cuba's policy came in Bolivia in 1967, when Che Guevara's guerrilla band was opposed by both the peasantry and the Bolivian Communist Party and Guevara was killed. Guevara, an Argentine doctor, revolutionary theoretician, and Castro comrade-in-arms, was a charismatic symbol of Cuban efforts to spread the revolution in the Western Hemisphere.

Cuba's support for revolutionaries in the hemisphere, along with the openly Marxist-Leninist character of its government and its alignment with the USSR, contributed to its isolation in the hemisphere. In 1962, the Organization of American States (OAS) excluded the Cuban government from active participation. Two years later, the OAS foreign ministers resolved that OAS member nations should have no diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba and should suspend all trade and sea transportation.

In the late 1960s, Cuba de-emphasized its policy of supporting revolutions abroad and began to pursue normal government-to-government relations with other Latin American nations. By the mid-1970s, Cuba had reestablished diplomatic relations with a number of countries in the region. In 1975, the OAS lifted comprehensive sanctions against Cuba and deferred to individual member states the option of diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba.

Cuba is now pursuing a two-track policy toward its hemispheric neighbors, seeking improved relations with existing governments while continuing support for select radical groups and violent, anti-democratic movements. Cuban backing for insurgent groups, like the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, includes military and intelligence training, weapons, guidance, and organizational support. Two arms seizures in 1989 demonstrate Cuba's continuing committment to the FMLN. In May, the Salvadoran police discovered a major insurgent arms cache which contained Soviet-designed arms and over 300,000 rounds of ammunition manufactured in Cuba as recently as 1988. In October, Honduran authorities seized a furniture truck loaded with weapons and Cuban-manufactured ammunition destined for the FMLN. Cuba's military support for the FMLN runs counter to the peace process developed by Central American presidents.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Cuba expanded its military presence

abroad—deployments reached 50,000 troops in Angola, 24,000 in Ethiopia, more than 1,500 military advisers in Nicaragua, and hundreds more elsewhere. In Angola, Cuban troops, supported logistically by the USSR, backed the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), one of the movements competing for power after Portugal's withdrawal. In Ethiopia, Cuban soldiers fought against Somali forces. In the late 1980s, Cuba began to pull back militarily. The 1988 Angola-Namibia accords provided a timetable for the complete withdrawal of Cuban forces by mid-1991; Cuba unilaterally removed its remaining forces from Ethiopia; and Fidel Castro announced an end to military assistance to Nicaragua following the Sandinistas' 1990 electoral defeat.

Cuban-Soviet Relations

Ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union have been close since the early 1960s. Cuba receives critical assistance, which both keeps its economy afloat and enables it to maintain a disproportionately large military establishment. The Soviets in 1988 provided about $4.3 billion in economic assistance, largely in the form of sugar subsidies, and $1.5 billion in military assistance to Cuba. Overall, Soviet assistance to Cuba in recent years has accounted for about 20% of Cuba's gross domestic (social) product. The USSR supplies more than 70% of Cuba's imports, 90% of its fuel supply, and nearly all of its military requirements.

The USSR in turn receives important strategic military and political benefits. The Soviet presence in Cuba includes a 2,800-man motorized rifle brigade, 2,800 military advisers, and 6-8,000 civilian advisors. At Lourdes, Cuba, the Soviets maintain their largest signal intelligence-gathering facility outside the USSR. The Lourdes site is staffed by 2,100 Soviet technicians and monitors US civilian and military communications. Soviet reconnaissance aircraft and naval task groups periodically are deployed to Cuba.

Cuban-Soviet ties led to a direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1962 over the installation of Soviet nuclear equipped missiles in Cuba, resolved only when Moscow agreed to the withdrawal of the missiles and other offensive weapons. In late 1970, the possibility that the Soviet Union was contemplating the establishment of a submarine base in Cuba became an issue. However, Soviet submarine bases were never established. The facilities were turned over to the Cuban government. In 1971, President Nixon affirmed the existence of an understanding between the United States and the USSR that the Soviet Union will not install any offensive weapons systems in Cuba nor operate such systems from there, including sea-based systems.

Cuba's special relationship with the Soviet Union remains intact, despite economic problems and ideological differences. President Gorbachev became the third Soviet leader to visit Cuba in April 1989 and spoke out against the "export of revolution" during a speech to Cuba's National Assembly. Following Gorbachev's trip, Castro and the Cuban press began to criticize harshly the reform movement in the Soviet Union. In August 1989, two reform-minded Soviet magazines, "Moscow News" and "Sputnik," were banned from circulation in Cuba.

Cuba remains heavily dependent on Soviet financial support. The USSR's first delivery of advanced MiG-29 fighter aircraft in 1989 signaled its ongoing military commitment to the Cuban government. Economic changes in the Soviet Union are causing a transformation in the two countries' economic relationship. For example, the Cuban government was forced to ration bread because of delays in Soviet grain deliveries at the beginning of 1990.

Cuba had established firm ties with other socialist nations in Eastern Europe and with North Korea and Vietnam. Strains appeared in Cuba's relations with Eastern Europe after the fall of Communist governments there. Castro publicly condemned the "sad" developments in Eastern Europe as a return to "repugnant capitalism." Several of Cuba's former Eastern European allies have openly criticized Cuban policies on human rights and resistance to reform. Cuba has been a member of CEMA since 1972, but the emerging democratic governments in Eastern Europe have been increasingly less inclined to support Cuba's old-line communist policies at their expense. As Eastern Europe moves toward profit-making and enterprise-to-enterprise trading, Cuba is becoming an unattractive trading partner.

US-Cuban Relations

Following Castro's takeover, bilateral relations deteriorated sharply, primarily because of the imposition of a repressive dictatorship in Cuba, its anti-American rhetoric and actions, such as the non-compensated nationalization of American property valued at about $2 billion, and its support for violent subversive groups attacking US allies. The United States broke diplomatic relations on January 3, 1961, after the Cuban government demanded that the US embassy in Havana be reduced to a skeleton staff. In 1963, the United States implemented a comprehensive economic embargo against Cuba in response to hostile actions by the Castro government. US-Cuban relations in the Castro years have been characterized by varying degrees of hostility. Tensions between the two peaked during the abortive "Bay of Pigs" invasion (by anti-Castro Cubans supported by the United States) in April 1961 and the October 1962 missile crisis.

Following Cuba's de-emphasis on the export of revolution, the United States did not oppose the OAS's decision to make discretionary the application of sanctions against Cuba and began to discuss normalization of relations with Cuba. Secret talks were conducted, but were halted when Cuba intervened on a large scale in Angola. Subsequent efforts undertaken to improve relations led to the establishment of interests sections in the two capitals on September 1, 1977: the US Interests Section under the protection of the Swiss embassy in Havana and the Cuban Interests Section under the protection of the Czechoslovak embassy in Washington, DC.

The new dialogue did not prosper, however. A series of new differences—Cuba's failure to withdraw troops from Angola, Cuban intervention in Ethio-

Travel Notes

Naturalized US citizens of Cuban origin are generally considered under Cuban law to be Cuban citizens only. The US government insists on its right and duty to represent the interests of all its citizens, but the Cuban government generally refuses such representation on behalf of persons it considers to have Cuban nationality. US officials are generally denied access to US citizens of Cuban origin who have been detained by Cuban authorities.

US Treasury regulations: The Department of the Treasury regulates all transactions between persons subject to US jurisdiction and Cuba or its nationals, including travel-related transactions. The current Cuban assets control regulations prohibit the following transactions: financial transactions of any kind related to tourism, business, or recreational purposes, whether travellers go directly or through third countries; importing into the United States goods or services of Cuban origin either directly or through third countries; exporting US products, technology, or services to Cuba either directly or through third countries, except for informational materials; engaging in transactions anywhere in the world with Cuban nationals or other individuals or organizations acting on Cuba's behalf; and sending remittances to Cuba, except for $500 every quarter to the household of a close relative.

Penalties for violating these regulations range up to 10 years in prison and $50,000 in fines. For further information, contact the Chief of Licensing, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of the Treasury, Washington, DC 20220.

Transportation: There are no scheduled commercial transportation services between the United States and Cuba. Currently, two private services operate charter flights several times a week between Havana and Miami. Persons authorized to travel to Cuba by the Department of Treasury may use those flights.

pia, increasing Cuban subversion in the Caribbean basin, the delivery of sophisticated Soviet weaponry to Cuba, and the Cuban government's deliberate efforts to violate US sovereignty and immigration laws through the 1980 Mariel exodus—eroded any possibility of significant improvement in bilateral relations and posed new challenges to US and allied security interests. In the Mariel exodus, Castro mixed criminals and other undesirables in with about 125,000 Cubans seeking refuge in the United States.

Quiet efforts to explore the prospects for improving relations were initiated by the United States in 1981 and 1982; however, the Cuban government refused to alter its conduct with regard to US concerns about Cuba's support for violent political change and its close political and military cooperation with the Soviet Union. The liberation of Grenada by the United States and regional allies in 1983 and the expulsion of Cuban forces based there was a setback for Cuba's plans to expand the revolution in the Caribbean basin.

A year later, the United States and Cuba negotiated an agreement to normalize immigration and return to Cuba the "excludables" who had arrived during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. Cuba suspended this agreement in May 1985, following the initiation of the Voice of America's Radio Marti, which broadcasts current national and international news of interest to residents of Cuba. The Mariel agreement, reinstated in November 1987, allowed normal migration to occur between the two countries.

Cuban support for subversive groups, internal repression, and the continuing Soviet military connection are primary areas of concern to the United States and major obstacles to improved bilateral relations. The United States expressed concern over the 1989 trial and execution of senior military officials under questionable circumstances and without due process and the jailing of human rights activists who testified before the UN Human Rights Commission delegation which visited Havana in 1988. Goals of US policy remain to:

- Isolate Cuba in the international community;
- Enforce a comprehensive economic embargo; and
- To provide access to news and other information to the Cuban people pending fundamental changes in Cuban behavior.

Despite existing tensions, the United States continues to discuss areas of mutual concern, such as immigration, with the government of Cuba.

Interests Sections

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